**Male Teachers Impact on Male Student Behavior and Achievement in Mathematics**

An Action Research Project

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Introduction

Historically, because teaching has been viewed as woman’s work, and that men who teach especially in the lower grades were lacking in masculinity, this has resulted in the overall reduction of male teachers. The problem is that the percentage of male teachers at the elementary school level has fallen regularly since 1981- when it reached an all time high of 18%.This reduction in the overall number of male teachers has had a negative effect on the male student population in regards to student achievement level and behavior.

Statement of the Problem

Observation at PS X in the New York City elementary school system has revealed a direct correlation between student behavior and lower academic achievement in Mathematics, especially among male students of lower income single parent families.

Review of the Literature

Researcher indicates a decline in the number of male teachers in our educational systems this in turn has had a dramatic negative effect on student achievement especially among young black males. As a black male teacher at PS X, I had the privilege and opportunity to teach a fourth grade class. This class consisted of all the former third graders with academic and behavioral problems. I realized that most of the students with behavioral issues were having problems in mathematics. My action research topic attempts to explore the correlation between teacher gender and student achievement among students with academic and behavior issues from single parent households.

The main reason for the absence of male teachers in the teaching profession is the historical perspective held by society. The historical view held that teaching was woman’s work and that men who teach especially in the lower grades were lacking in masculinity. Researchers have proposed that teachers’ gender is a key factor influencing student achievement therefore the lack of African-American male or male teachers in general is the root cause of the academic and behavioral problems experienced by black male students. According to researchers Dawson(1971), Ashley & Lee (2003) the solution to the student achievement problem is to recruit and employ more male teachers into the profession because male students need male role models. Male teachers serve this purpose in addition to being better motivators for male students. In research conducted by Dawson (1971) on 800 men, more than 35% felt that having a male primary teacher challenged them to work harder at school. They felt that male teachers were more approachable. About 50% stated that they were more likely to approach a male teacher about bullying and 49% were more likely to talk to them about school work.

There are numerous other programs which aim to correct this problem along the line of teachers as role models. Clemson University has created a recruitment program amply named Call Me Mister (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models). Similarly, Brooklyn College currently has a program called the Urban Community Teachers Project, both of these agendas aim to rectify the student achievement issue by placing well trained Black male teachers in the classrooms. Social and cultural research indicate that by putting well trained black teachers in the classroom would have a positive academic and social effect on students, according to Professor Lamont Flowers, Director of the Charles H. Houston Center for the Study of the Black Experience in Education at Clemson University.

The British Government policy on teacher recruitment gives a high priority to increasing the number of male teaches especially at the primary level. They feel that matching teachers and pupils by gender will improve boy’s engagement with school. This policy relies on the widely held notion that pupils do better when there’s a match between the characteristics of teachers and students in terms of gender and ethnicity (Carrington & Shelton, 2003; Dee, 2006). Other researchers such as Marsh, Martin & Cheng, (2008) also concur that teacher gender does have a large impact on student test performance, teacher perceptions of students and student engagement with academic material. In other words, boys learn more from men and girls learn more from women. Dee, (2006) stated in his research, girls have better educational outcomes when taught by women and boys are better off when taught by men. Researchers who promote role models as a motivation factor for improving student achievement rely on Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory. This theory states that people learn through observation, imitation and modeling. He elaborates by saying that” most behavior is learned observationally through modeling; from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed and on later occasion this coded information serves as a guide for action.”

According to published reports by The Teaching Commission(2004) teaching quality is a critical factor in attempts to improve our nations global competitiveness. Ding & Sherman, 2006 researched the relationship between teacher effectiveness and students achievement as measured by test scores. They found that an effective teacher employs systematic teaching procedures (Kemp & Hall, 1992) and spend more time working with small groups throughout the day (Taylor et al, 1999). Practitioner Porter (2002) found that pupils gain more academically when instructions is effectively connected to assessment. Sanders (2000), states that difference in teacher effectiveness is the single largest factor affecting academic growth of populations of students. A Flores (2007) research study also addressed the underlying cause of the achievement gap or opportunity gap in mathematics for African-American, Latino and low- income students. It states that African-American, Latino and low-income students are less likely to have access to experienced and qualified teachers, more likely to face low expectations and less likely to receive equitable per student funding. This research pinpointed the underlying causes of low achievement not just income level and ethnic group. Funding in our school system plays a very important role in the disparity gap in achievement. Research conducted by Nye, Konstantopoulos & Hedges,(2004)states there’s some evidence that teacher effect may increase student achievement, especially in mathematics and reading at the lower grade level. Because there has been no conclusive evidence on the relationship between teacher gender and student achievement, this study by Chudgar & Sankar (2008) investigates the relationship between student learning outcomes and the presence of women teachers in Indian classrooms. Analysis shows that that the male and female teachers differ in terms of their classroom management practices and their belief in students’ learning ability. Female teacher classroom tend to perform better in language but there are no such benefits for mathematics. There has been no conclusive evidence or research to indicate that teacher gender affects students’ achievement level, so my intention is to further investigate this relationship.

Statement of the Hypothesis

`Ninety minutes of weekly instructional intervention by a male teacher will decrease behavioral problems and improve academic achievement in mathematics for fourth and fifth grade male students from low-income, single female parent households who attend urban Public School X.